Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
North Carolina Digital Heritage Center

https://archive.org/details/victoriapress20012ashe

# Victoria Press

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College

2006

*Cover design by Jennifer Lynn Browning*
*Special thanks to Clayton Couch for*
*design and technical assistance in preparing this issue*

# Victoria Press

*Twelfth Issue*

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
Asheville, North Carolina

2006

**Editorial Board**

Jennifer Lynn Browning, English and Communications
Clayton Couch, Learning Resources Center
Alex Desiato, English and Communications
Erin O'Neal, English and Communications
Erik Tschekunow, English and Communications

○○○

This issue of Victoria Press is made possible through the Support of K. Ray Bailey, President, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College.
All rights reserved.

# Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Prose

Mending a Broken Heart *Chris Fay* 35
God's Little Joke *Cathy James* 44
How to Tie Your Shoes *Debra Maddox* 56
Traversing the Stretch *Erin O'Neal* 61

Poetry

Constant Cravings *Kenet Adamson* 2
The Constant Burden is But Mine *Joe Allawos* 6
Te Quiero *Denise Anthes* 7
Te Quiero Translation *Denise Anthes* 8
A Snapshot *Jennifer Browning* 9
Rockefeller's Atlas *Jennifer Browning* 11
I Could Settle *Jennifer Browning* 14
Untitled *Clayton Couch* 16
Untitled *Clayton Couch* 19
Untitled *Clayton Couch* 20
Untitled *Clayton Couch* 21
Oh Well *Tom Dechant* 22
My Hair *Alex DeSiato* 23
Love Letter to My Brother *Alex Desiato* 24
Before Class *Nancy Dillingham* 27
Blood/Brothers *Nancy Dillingham* 28
Parlor *Nancy Dillingham* 29
Eggshell *Eileen Eliot* 30
Explaining to My Daughter the Properties of a Central Obsession *Eileen Eliot* 32
Tough Man Competition *Kathy Godfrey* 37
Internet Addiction Disorder *Randee Goodstadt* 41

Immemorial *Ron Layne* 50
The Whole of Me *Debra Deitering Maddox* 52
Venus and Adonis *Erin O'Neal* 59
Gardening – 1979 *Erin O'Neal* 60
Like a Black-eyed Canadian Goose *Carolyn Pidgeon* 64
You were of grease and us *Michelle Rogers* 65
Your Life Begins *Susan Shorey* 69
I See Him *Susan Shorey* 70
Frozen *Gabrielle Thompson* 72
Sundays with Mrs. Morrison *Chris Tibbetts* 74
Afloat After Your Death *Erik Tschekunow* 77
Spotting Elizabeth Bishop on the
Gloucester Docks *Erik Tschekunow* 78
After Making Love to Stravnsky's
*The Rite of Spring* *Erik Tschekunow* 79

## Visual Art

Fork New River *Joe Franklin*
Biltmore 05 *Jennifer Browning* 13
Big Wheel Belize *Joe Allawos* 18
Asheville *Joe Franklin* 26
Grandfather's Barn *Joe Franklin* 43
Lake Logan 05 *Jennifer Browning* 51
Like a Black-eyed Canadian Goose *Constance Smutz* 63
Mt. Pisgah Tower *Joe Franklin* 68
Beaver's Perch *Jennifer Browning* 71
Fernihurst *Joe Franklin* 73

Notes on Contributors 80

# Introduction

By Jennifer Lynn Browning

Welcome to Victoria Press's second decade of publication. In past issues, Victoria Press has presented the work of staff and faculty from Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College as well as neighboring community colleges.

This issue of Victoria Press continues that tradition by presenting poetry, short fiction, personal essays, and artwork from all areas of the Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College campus as well as contributions from McDowell Technical Community College and Haywood Community College. Readers will find selections from faculty in the Law Enforcement Academy, JobLink, Continuing Education, English, Communications, History, Biology, and many other areas.

In her introduction to *Telling Stories*, Joyce Carol Oates writes "All artists know consciously or instinctively that the secret intention of their life's work is to rescue from the plunge of time something of beauty, permanence, significance in another's eyes" (Oates xiii). As you settle in to peruse this year's Victoria Press, the editorial board hopes that you will enjoy the rescue efforts of all of our contributors.

Enjoy!

Jennifer Browning
Clayton Couch
Alex DeSiato
Erin O'Neal
Erik Tschekunow

Oates, Joyce Carol, ed. *Telling Stories: An Anthology for Writers*. New York: Norton, 1998.

## Constant Cravings

By Kenet Adamson

Evenings spent pondering you. Am I awake
thinking of you,
needing you,
because of you?
My craving is
insatiable. You are my master, mistress, mate.
I long for you now.

On every corner, your curves
and figure flash me.
Like neon lights, you blind me.
I make excuses for our tryst while
Buying my essential
non-essentials,
I caress your moist
hourglass curves
in our stolen
moments
together.
I desire
you for me.

Saturdays,
parted by the weekend, leaves me jittery,
nauseous, and wracked with migraines
that drill and destroy
all thoughts but you.
I can't hide our connection.
We part and I miss
your essence and effervescence.

She doesn't appreciate how committed I am to you.
I covet your time
spent
with
others.

I taste
your falseness, and your sweetness swells
my physicality.
Your unreal syrupiness can
not sate my cravings
only tempting me for
*the real thing.*
You scream to me
from billboards,
ads,
and TVs.
*Take me*
*I'm yours.*
I hunger
for you
for me.

My needs are great.
I care no longer.
Resolve crumbles, and anticipating
Your taste,
my heart
palpitates.
Popping open your top,
I hear the psssh and sup deeply.
The caffeine
surges, the saccharine
sweetens, the sodium

swells.
A Diet Coke resolves
my ache for you,
for me.
Sated, need simmers for a short while.

*That's the way it should be.*

*Fork New River*
*Dr. Joe Franklin*

## The Constant Burden Is But Mine

By Joe Allawos

Bond beyond denying,
Tried and truly trying
To keep it out of mind.
Seized upon the moment;
This time the man walks freely by me,
Stumbling to his bedside rest,
The constant burden is but best.

A feeling fast withdrawn from the suicide
That's what it is, the suicide for which
We long, we strive, we chance,
Alone and damp and cold.
Let the sweet vermillion be;
It's finally crawled out of its cage.
Let the sweet vermillion be;
It's finally come of age.

Not heresay, but real dementia;
Has me beaten down in the aisles.
Trampled upon my wits, my bones;
Destroyed me, took me home.
Back into that place, that womb;
That subtle tomb where everyone
Comes to reside.
The changing tension is alarming;
Astounding rhetoric escapes me;
The lack of justice still elates me;
Yet fails full well to lead me to the shrine;
The constant burden is but mine.

**Te Quiero**
By Denise Anthes

Te quiero, mi amor
Te quiero con risa y ternura

Las estrellas, el cielo
Me abres los ojos y el alma
Y me das el mundo

Mi mente, mi Corazon
Las flores en mi jardin
Los pajaros en los arboles
La nieve en la montana

El silencio
cuando nuestros almas
estan llenas

Los colores del arcoiris
Los besos de las mariposas
Te doy todo a ti
En un cuchicheo del tiempo

## Te Quiero Translation

By: Denise Anthes

I care for you, my love
I love you with laughter and tenderness

The stars, the sky…
You open my heart and my soul
And give me the world

My mind, my heart,
The flowers in my garden
The birds in the trees
The snow on the mountain

The silence
When our souls are full

The colors of the rainbows
The kisses of butterflies
I give all to you
In a whisper if time

- This is for a child, beloved friend or lover. Someone to whom you would happily share or give all the most special things in your life. The flower garden doesn't exist yet – it represents my dreams, my creativity, the future – POTENTIAL
- The birds in my trees are a source of joy to me, which I share gladly
- The silence…that space of contentment and peace of just being with people we care about

## A snapshot

By Jennifer Browning

Joey – tired, terrified,
standing in ICU.
Jeremiah – hooked up
to every machine imaginable.
beeps and clangs
forced breathing
in
out
Joey's hand on Jeremiah's chest
"breathe, son, just breathe."

Jeremiah – 26 years old
Our cop
The strong prince charming
Inviolate in his cockiness
Shattered
Broken
Clinging to life
"breathe, son, just breathe."

Joey -- four months
every day, 24/7
his calm voice never
betraying the terror
in his eyes
Steady
Calm
A presence even when
Jeremiah couldn't have known.
"breathe, son, just breathe."

Jeremiah –
shaking and sweating through
another storming session.
brain trauma reaction
a violent spasm of the brain
heart rate goes up
blood pressure spikes
temperature rises.
"breathe, son, just breathe"

Joey – every time
His hand, there.
resting -- center of his son's chest.
Jeremiah's breath would
Slow
Settle
Knowledge of his daddy's love
apparent in every labored breath.
Every time the storm would peak
and ebb
to the sound of his daddy's voice
"breathe, son, just breathe."

## Rockefeller's Atlas

By Jennifer Browning

Fear is like Rockefeller's Atlas.
But, the world he holds has swiss cheese holes.

Fear is a sunset over the mountains,
the smell of a Manhattan morning – smog and street dogs, car exhaust and garbage,
a high pitched girly giggle,
morning breath after a garlic dinner,
the ache of fingers after well applied steel wool.

Its smell is hot and frigid.
Mary Shelley meets Amityville.
When I breathe the fear,
the burn of the cold fires my insides.

Swirly
fear explodes.
And, I am
prostrated.
The sharp and enticing taste of fear lies heavily on my tongue.
Je suis, je suis, je suis.
Warm and cozy the knife sits at my throat.
I make friends with my fear.

She hopes for love and understanding but
Finds only fear
And she shall always know that fear
is there.
Doberman's teeth waiting to snap.

I am the totality of my fear's control.
Je suis, je suis, je suis.
Fear sings a lullaby, soft and convincing.
The ice rings round and burns
my eyes with tears.

*Biltmore 05*
*Jennifer Lynn Browning*

## I Could Settle

By Jennifer Browning

I could settle.
It's in my nature.
Settle in.
Settle down.
Settle til I'm so bored I could fucking scream.

I could settle
for status quo
for evenings alone
for movies and tv and marathon
reading sessions.

I could settle
for comfort
for safety
for calm.

I could settle.
Sit down and take it.
Would be much easier

than fight to believe
than perservere through darkness
than yearn
and ache
and grieve
and face the emptiness
again
and again.

I could settle
I could be hypnotized by the soft lull
of settle's waves against
the shore

I could settle for
grey
and mauve
and black
and tan.

I could settle.

But, if I settle
What would I miss?
A hand to hold in the dark.
An embrace against the cold.
A laugh to chase away the fear.

Arms to hold
and comfort
and support
and guide.

I could settle.
I can do it on my own.
I am strong
and capable and
Quite willing to carry my own.

I could settle
for that.
Or.
Believe in more.

## Untitled

By Clayton Couch

Special: Two wrens clean
under wings on a ceiling
steel beam in the Lowe's
out near the interstate.

Special: Crosses train
tracks under the bridge,
for there's no sidewalk
on the highway above.

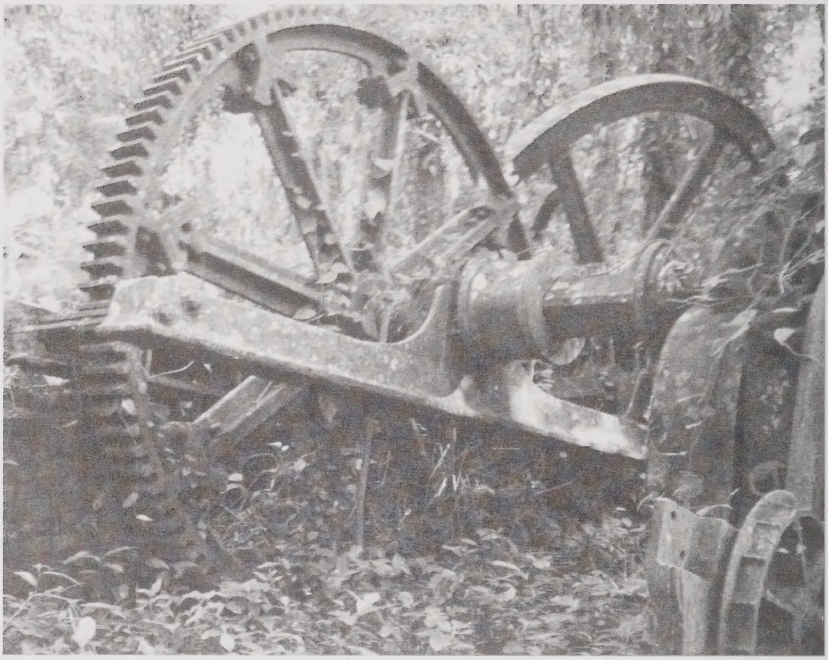
Special: The ceiling in
our apartment rattles
with every footstep taken
by the dog and his man.

Special: Find it hard
to sleep with toxic
compounds coursing
into brain chemistry.

Special: I've checked
my credit rating five
hundred times in six
months just to forget it.

Special: Suspicions
about who might be
whispering that acrid
dream to your partner.

Special: If a single
plastic skylight were
to be opened, the birds
could again taste blue.



*Big Wheel Belize*
*By Joe Allawos*

## Untitled

By Clayton Couch

Redial that valley, where cliffs cuss out fire,
estrange famous believers, matriculate towards temperance.
Throng won its independence from fuck,
singing and dancing astride the creekbed.

*It* landed pancake. The fungal gymnasium produced
these fallen guinea pigs. Up the face, on mill houses oozing
poor pavement, the bridge chased saber-rattlers poised
for nicotine withdrawal. To squeeze through dark dirt.

Mistakes, and those made in trees, boil behind
this moving steel beggar. Cards reflect beards and camping
accessories, where checkers are played standing up.
Packed, making small talk with this or that Ayatollah.

There are no truths that a robot grenade launcher cannot
grasp, or at least explode. One night the bluegrass played
on forever's back, massaging everything that hurt during
the war. Stains her speak, assigns the yearn to potable eyes.

Once hangs instead of milk, and athleticism stalks night's poison
parking situation. Chins of another absence. Head read
shoulders, they're drunk and none too pretty with glasses
and skinny wrists. Meth damsels without parasols or slippers.

## Untitled

By Clayton Couch

Stripped, and these gray constituents keep taunting this one's inability to find the right spaces. That was an afternoon, in snow's best clothing. To hear dogs laying claim to heart. And vegetation's in the cooler, not rotting beneath topsoil in my excavations. Them was crowded around tables, and pieces of adrift paragraphs came flanking those beats. The guitar and constricted lyric. A bless.

To circle a light around the moon, when the cloud protrudes its cauliflower and we miss. Backward down in the aspic apartments, I come upon you sleeping, working at some labor that was covered beneath trembled bowls of worry. Just that we might fail here. In this potpourri, the hints of smokers passing on their histories of need. Once morning, a dream remains spiked as a bad taste.

Then, the parking and credit cards. And there is nowhere up on whether or not the bomb will be defused. Either he's cutting a hole in the wall, or that's the loudest vacuum I've ever heard. And when the sunlight sneaks back into the window, this bore will find himself a nice girl to tell sorties. "Pacing, my man, watch your pacing." I guess she didn't take kindly to my inflatable joke.

## Untitled

By Clayton Couch

Quick fixed and souffled like some kind of overstuffed popular cologne. You are reminded about energy wasted and misplaced. The intellect wavers. Some old son jumping up and down about some perceived slight. Perhaps this water bottle contains blue flashbacks about living on the rocks, when those bodies would fly past the window before thumping on the dumpster below. Our manager put a chainlink fence up there to prevent bad love from squandering itself on graduate degrees. We didn't know how to self-medicate back then; we always figured that every girl looked like Marcia Brady. When lust came, it was crazed.

## Oh Well

By Tom Dechant

Oh well, happened again
those expectations, always there
yours, mine, makes no sense
so much easier not to care.

Oh well, happened again
better to not let on
damned cravings, yearnings, fantasies
from which memories are drawn.

Oh well, happened again
taking chances, too much at stake
scary thoughts, who's to blame
hold it inside, no one's mistake.

Oh well, happened again
but grabbed on tight, gave it a shot
left the room of who cares
pieces falling, shaking a lot.

Oh well, happened again
Laughing, giddy, being alive
no bars, ruts, inner struggles
free, spirited, without fears contrived

## My Hair

By Alex Desiato

The summer
when we broke up
I cut my bangs too short:
drunk with dull scissors (2 am)
slicing and gouging at my hair
like a psycho murderer in a slasher
flick. My coarse bristles
the dim blonde who runs up the stairs;
no escape.

My girlfriends laughed at me,
sympathizing in soft clucks
and coos—having been there themselves
though not with hair; other things:
crumb cake, suede jackets, endless bad poems,
ripe pomegranates, wrecked cars,
purpled wine dried
at the bottom of a cool crystal stem.
(What we do to deal.)

So now, a year and months later,
getting into fall,
when I wear that scarf (you hate)
with the multi-colored stripes,
I wanted to tell you
that it's long enough now—
my hair—
that when I tuck it
behind my ears it stays back

## Love Letter to My Brother

By Alex Desiato

From you, in my wallet
I carry a note you wrote
years ago and put on something in the fridge
that Mom cooked.
*Don't eat this,*
(with a skull and crossbones scrawled
below in ballpoint ink)
*it's poison.*

Only poison
was spelled P-O-S-I-N
because you were, what, ten?
And besides, you were never much
for writing (not like me.)
But you were *older*,
which translated to *smarter*
in my little-kid mind.

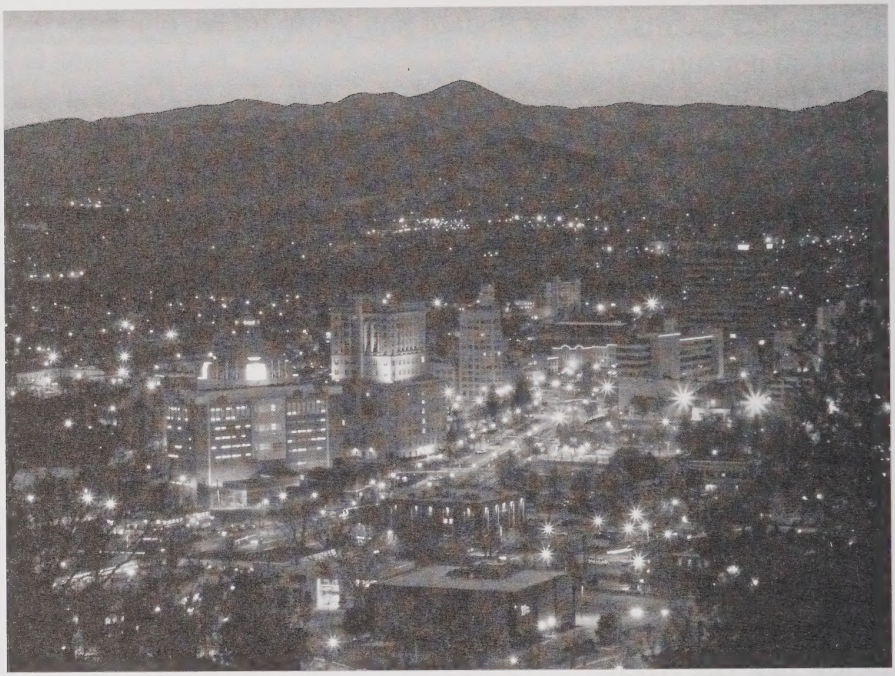
As my only sibling,
You have a job you didn't ask for—
the keeper to that gate:
Childhood.

Now we talk and I almost say:
Remember when we climbed the hallway walls?
How you would twist off Barbie's head for revenge?
Can you still smell the weeds that grew out of the sandbox?
And how the night air felt when we watched shooting stars from the roof?
Do you know any secret languages that I left behind on the timid white mountain of youth?

Instead, I ask you about
work,
your car,
how often you're going to the gym.

We're older; adults.
And I'm not sure
who's the wiser one—
(though you sure make more money.)
You know,
Mom was always afraid you'd become
Alex P. Keaton—the lone Republican
in a family of liberals.
Her sigh of relief is that
You do vote like we vote.
(Even if you still don't recycle.)

Last year you sent me an email
that said *Becky's brother died*
*in a car wreck*
*last month.*
*I just found out.*
Below that you typed
*I don't know what*
*I would do without you.*
I keep that in my wallet, too.



*Asheville*
*Dr. Joe Franklin*

## Before Class

By Nancy Dillingham

The morning is rich with you
all painted, pierced, and pivotal
exotic as a wedding cake--
there for the taking

Are you, my sweets, wild animals
at the watering hole
all glistening and shiny
alive and tasty as you look

in the desultory air?

## BLOOD/BROTHERS

By Nancy Dillingham

1. August night: two brothers
   swap slugs of white lightning, get tight

   A fight, a shout
   a shot rings out

2. *Eons ago two brothers*
   *wade into clear water*

   *on their haunches in awe*
   *watch crawfish crawl*

   *breathe as one*
   *knees so close they touch*

3. Later that night the earth hushes
   old people put ears to the ground

   hear bloodhounds running
   the moon red and rising

## Parlor

By Nancy Dillingham

White petunias bloom profusely
luminous as the moon

Their fragrance takes me homeward
to Grandma's sitting room

Above the coldest fireplace
sepia-toned  photos gaze

imposing as the roving ghosts
who guest on her divan

Nostalgia fits warm velvet
I rest in her cool tomb

## Eggshell

By Eileen Eliot

The fog is all around us
as we follow the Blue Ridge
Parkway up past 6000 feet
We're in a cloud my son says
thrilled he can stick his tongue
out, taste cold wind
like an airplane
only we're right here

We park near the top of the highest
peak east of the Mississippi
take the easy way up rock stairs
to the observation tower
shabby and windtorn
How does it hold us up he asks
(the earth an eggshell he imagines
with all this weight on it)

On the way down
we take the long way to the parking lot
rocky trail past hurricane wrecked
trees shrews that dart blindly
from uncut brush
half a mile takes an hour

Back in the car
we settle into the ride home;
he holds the wheel in the straight
places, gives it back
in the curves

We hold our breath on the downhills
Make yourself really
light he whispers

## Explaining to My Daughter the Properties of a Central Obsession

By Eileen Eliot

It can start at birth, a finger pricked
in the rush of fates around the table, smite
of ritual through antiseptic halls,
or much later
on a typical late night, grading
the fiftieth essay on why
attendance should not be required,
hand still on the red pen
your eyes jump to April's calendar page:
a runner, feet brushing miles of Arizona dune;
without your consent cells divide, yes,
like a pregnancy you didn't plan but will not
end, suddenly it seems
though it is never sudden
you're getting up at four a.m.
driving to the empty parking garage downtown
where you run up and down twenty miles
before dawn, sucking in the city's first
black and purple breath
satisfied as you've ever been.
In a cool mauve room it is your bowl of dug jewels
caked with mud and beetles: you take it
from a hidden door beneath the mantle
where English ivy balances brass candlesticks
immerse your hands, think only
in light and edges
(Be careful: closer to the fire
hairs on your arms blacken, you enter private
territory no trespassing alone because
for instance, a wildcat was seen there
and this is your dream
to see one)

It must be abstract enough, capable of perfection;
it will define you as a flock of buzzards
on a hot Everglades road circle and land
first ahead of you, then behind
around the next curve in the road again
marking a point of return
(And don't make it a man:
you'll fall toward and toward
his point of gravity, dead weight over coral rock
fingerprints scraped clean as shell)

Your grandmother hunted hummingbirds
hanging her homemade pill jar feeder in every
wilderness, every blooming backyard,
in one photograph finally catching a blur of wings
and the nest she said she would see before she died
smaller than a thumb, asking us
can you picture it, the eggs inside...
how she found it that last summer, woody thimble
on a milkweed branch in North Carolina,
full.

And yes, it can die, suddenly it seems
though it is never sudden:
a man defined by the geometrical proof
he has been scribbling on the palms of his hands
for thirty years writes in the missing step;
your violin fingers touch the right place on the strings
for the note that has vibrated just beyond reach
for as many full moons as you can remember;
the panther you shadowed east and west, rockies,
big cypress, crouched hours in swamp water to your thighs
becomes familiar as an old brown dog in the corner

and then, yes, the sadness, not for me to tell you how,
but the sadness, will take you where you really
have to go.

## Mending a broken heart:
## Find something extraordinarily beautiful and give your attention to it.

By Chris Fay

Meet Gabrielle (February, 2006, at 12 weeks old). A couple of months earlier, it was set to be a rough holiday season, because one of my two adult female German Shepherds' health was

deteriorating dramatically. This was not unexpected, but I did think she would make it until the spring or summer. It was not to be because our Carolina cold weather was taking a heavy toll on her. Then, about two weeks before Christmas, I believed it was time to put her to sleep. I did so very early on a Saturday morning, the same day my six-year-old was to march in his first Christmas parade (Fletcher's), as a Tiger Cub Scout.

This was one of the only dogs he had ever known and his first broken heart. Me? I've cried only three times in the last 20 years or so, the (too early) deaths of my dogs, and my wife's breast cancer scare (thankfully, negative). Needless to say, I suppose, neither Michael nor I were in any shape to be in a parade. Nicole was my seventh shepherd, though all of them have been my favorites for one reason or another.

While I thought it would be too early to actually look for another shepard to replace Nicole, by chance, I came across what sounded like a good litter nearby and dropped by to look at them. Later, after some emotional discussions, Michael agreed to at least look at them, having already concluded by then that the key to not having your heart broken was to avoid pets altogether. Approaching 9pm one night at the patient breeder's home, Michael selected one and named her. The ensuing weeks were a relentless variety of orientation, training, diminished sleep, clean-up, cuddling a new puppy to help her feel secure, and trying to get the other shepherd out of her depression so she could maybe start liking the new one. All of this activity meant there was a lot less time to lie around and feel badly. That was about when I started to believe we were going to be okay.

Thank you, Gabrielle.

And, rest in peace, Nicole.

## Tough Man Competition

By Kathy Godfrey

Fifteenth Annual, Asheville Civic Center.
Local boys, from broken farms and trailer parks outside
the freak-friendly city, put on boxing gloves and
fearless faces and try to pound their way to gold.
My husband and three friends decide it will be a joke to go.

Dale, Johnny, Dan and D2 (second of three
David's hired) want to sit in an empty row,
where they can spread out, lay their arms
across the backs of unoccupied seats, but
Moonlighting Walmart greeters in blue vests
wave flashlights and try to make numbers match,
try to make boys sit in their proper seats where men
in boots and women in big shiny hair and smiles
fit elbow to elbow.

Johnny says "I ain't sittin' all 'Brokeback'
up in here." They all agree and lean on the back
wall, defiant delinquents with graying temples,
until opening bell then claim the whole back row,
every other seat, leaving room for female buffers.

Johnny sips Crown from a sterling silver flask,
sneaks cell phone photos of mullets in the men's
room like Ansel Adams in a southern nightmare.
He wants to yell "Show your titties!" to a drunk
girl with Aqua-Netted curls and tight jeans.
Dale points out that her husband is big, drunk
and likely won't laugh.

Dan does 76 in the intermission
push up contest, but some hot punk
in a number eight baseball cap wins
with only 70. They all duly note
Dan with the gay journal in his desk rivals
Jack Palance at the Oscars, but ignore
his protests that he was robbed, and only
the invisible women between them hear
his childhood bully stories.

Johnny squashes D2's Hugh Heffner fantasies
of a threesome with two women whose husbands
have gone for Bud, so D2 decides maybe he'll
go to a club where it's darker, women are drunker,
forgetting he would be the old guy getting used by girls
for free drinks that they all dogged in 1985.
They tell him to shut the fuck up.

Prancing round the ring between fights
Hooter's girls on spindly new woman legs
have the spotlight but no idea how to entertain
the rowdy crowd with just a body and a knotted
t-shirt. Johnny dreads the day his little girl
will fall for such a proposition. Dale worries
the girls have no decent father and will be
used by boys with no honorable intentions.

One pair of good ole boys after another climb into the ring
flail away for the few consecutive
seconds they can last until one
goes down or gives up. Side bets are made-- a dollar each
on the fights in the ring and the couples
around them. One husband leads his swearing,
spandexed wife away by the arm and they don't come back.

When it's finally over, Johnny and Dale amble
toward the Wall Street parking deck. Johnny stops
at the Flying Frog to press his bared gut
against the street front window. They don't stop
arguing about what to eat to laugh at the bartender's
horror and disgust and decide to do Dominos
and a dozen fresh hot glazed on the way home.

Back at Johnny's, they sit on the porch under
the weirdly warm February sky in t-shirts
and jeans, sock feet propped on the rail
next to the smoldering bowl.
Fifteen minutes after midnight.

No talking just chewing and grunting
satisfaction of pepperoni, stretchy cheese,
fried dough with melted sugar. Silence
fills in around them drawing them closer than
the too-small seats at the arena. Times
Dale escaped his father's accusations
of being "nothin' but your momma's
little sissy toy" and his mother's
depressed neglect, eating and sleeping
at Johnny's.
Days Johnny was too sad to get up and no one
cared to call him out of bed. When Dale
would come over, make Johnny dress
and come out because he was wanted. Days
after school when Johnny pretended it
was normal that Dale's mom locked them out
of the house because she saw demons in their eyes.
And days Dale pretended it was cool
that twelve-year-old Johnny got to drive

his father home from bars even though he
had to wait in the cold, dark Cadillac
for hours: "Jus' keep th'emblem ona whi-line
son anwe'll be jus' fine."
They ignored each other's terror and shame
and together, they took a football team to State,
won cheerleaders, baseball games, and fist fights.
Later on came the military,
wives and divorces,
drugs and parties,
and suicide attempts,
and jail,
and loss,
collateral damage,
heavy casualties.

Now in middle age, almost all of it
can be a joke depending on the day.
Now, when they are finally still,
sticky and full, and tucked together
in the whispering night,
they know the peace of conquerors,
no room for a woman between them.

## Internet Addiction Disorder

By Randee Goodstadt

The Internet: I love it!!
It's vast!
It's crazy!
It's great!

Full of everything imaginable!
(Lots of junk)
But lots of gems, too!

As a kid, I always loved writing,
Always had pen-pals.

Now I have email
On the order of 200 a day.

Lots of professional stuff
Lots to delete:

[Imagine: Monty Python: Spam, spam, spam, spam]

Now I work on-line, too!
Teach on-line
Communicate with staff and colleagues on-line
Shop on-line
Look things up on-line

Internet Addiction Disorder is noted
In my on-line search,
'Though not yet in the DSM!

Do I feel bad on a day away from the Internet?
Am I blue without my email?

Did I miss the flickering screen when
Hurricanes brought the power down?

Heck yes!
Off to Twelve-Step for me!
My name is Randee and I'm an Internet Addict.

[Imagine: Paul Simon: Mama, don't take my Internet from me!]

*Grandfather's Barn*
*Dr. Joe Franklin*

## God's Little Joke
## Chapter 1: Cave Jokes [excerpt]
By Cathy James

When they came for Punt McDermott last spring to tell him his mother had been crushed under a combine, there were two of them, the principal and the school nurse. This time it was the principal and Reverend Sharpley, my minister. When I saw them at the door I felt that cold, sickening wave that brings a little round of amnesia for whatever you were doing the instant before. Mrs. Jackson went out in the hall, and we watched them through the glass slit in the door. She stepped back in and called for me.

That's what it was like last year when they told me my daddy had committed suicide. He couldn't have been run over by something, or died of cancer like everybody's grandparents, or died doing something embarrassing and funny like Mr. Willingham who had a heart attack in some old whore's bathroom. My daddy shot himself in the mouth with a 38 while he sat in the passenger seat of his pickup truck. He'd parked it in the middle of a cow pasture two counties over. We never did know why he was in the passenger's seat and not sitting behind the wheel. For months after the funeral I would lie awake at night imagining him getting out of the truck, walking around trying to decide if he really wanted to do it and agonizing over how it would make us feel about Stinkin' Pete Pitts finding his body with the dried up bits of brain and hair all over the windshield and the dashboard. We couldn't even give the truck away after that. People thought it was bad luck to drive around in a truck that somebody had killed himself in. Even Stinkin' Pete didn't want it.

The funeral was the worst thing I've ever sat through in my life. It was held it at the foot-washing Baptist church Daddy grew up in, and the whole place smelled of Lysol and car parts. A wad of people showed up who looked as if they'd crawled out from under cars on blocks. They all had babies with rattling coughs and

multi-colored mouths as if somebody had put Kool-Aid in their bottles. Mama said they were distant cousins of my daddy's. They all had eyebrows that ran together on their foreheads, even the women. I never saw a family that looked so much alike. The rest of the crowd was relatives I knew and some of Daddy's friends from the construction business. They had sunburned faces and missing teeth, but they seemed to have made a serious effort to scrape the Spackling, paint, and whatnot off them.

Everybody kept treating me like some little deaf orphan. At the luncheon following the service they'd look at Mama and ask right in front of me how I was doing, like I was too stupid or numb to answer for myself. Mama gave her standard answer that I was holding out, whatever that meant. Then they'd follow up with something like, "Ya'll have just been through so much in the past year. But you know He doesn't give us more than we can bear." Then they went home with their families in their Ford Fairlanes to their color TV sets in their split-level ranch homes and cooked on their charcoal grills on their newly built patios. Mama and I went home to our trailer in Loomacoochee and heated up plates of leftovers from the church meal for dinner and watched Truth or Consequences.

At first everybody was nice and people brought us food and stuff, but then they kept on treating me real careful. When somebody dies you have to be sure and get all your crazy-acting grief out while the dead person is still fresh on everybody's minds, or else they get annoyed with you for grieving when they're ready to be over and done with it. When they spoke to me they'd dip their heads down to catch my eyes, and they'd speak with this soft voice that swung up a note at the end of every word as if everything was a question. I got to hate it after a while. I was tired of people treating me like some pathetic little idiot that they had to speak to as if I were some bald headed kid with cancer who'd asked for a trip to Disneyland before she died. I wasn't dead and I wasn't dying. It just seemed everybody around me was, or had.

When Gary died the year before, everybody treated Mama that way. Women would give her hang dog looks and pat her shoulder in the grocery store. Men would shake their heads and say something about what a fine young man he was to give his life for our country. When he died we had to go to the airport to get his body, and army guys were all around doing stuff like saluting and standing in lines while they marched Gary's casket into a hearse with us standing around. Daddy blubbered out loud. That was the first time I'd ever seen him cry. My sister was carrying on like somebody had just pulled her liver out with tweezers. I couldn't figure out why. The whole time Gary was in Vietnam she kept saying she hoped he would get shot and that he was crude and disgusting because he would sit at the breakfast table and burp out loud while she was trying to eat her Rice Krispies, and whenever she had one of her friends over he would open her bedroom door and say she had a special delivery package and then fart right there in front of them.

Mama got a little crazy after Gary died. The day we got the news she took off across the field behind our house and wouldn't come back into the house for two days. She holed up in the Miller's barn about a quarter mile over on the other side of the field, and we took peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to her until she was ready to come back. Losing Gary crushed Mama. It broke something inside her and squashed it so flat that by the time the law came to tell us Daddy was dead she just sat alone for about ten minutes not saying anything. She took a bag of walnuts from the cabinet and began smashing them open between two bricks on the kitchen table. She went through a whole paper sack of walnuts before she stopped. I guess she used up all her grieving on Gary. When he got drafted and had to take a bunch of aptitude tests, she made it a point to tell everybody in church that her son scored really high on something called spatial reasoning. All it really meant was that he could get the pegs in the holes quicker than any of the other guys, but Mama carried on as if they were going to

have to build a new wing onto the barracks just to fit Gary's brain inside.

Gary was quick on his feet if nothing else. He spent the last three summers of his life helping Daddy do roofing for a subcontractor in town. When one of the other guys lost his footing and began to slide headfirst off the house it was Gary who sprinted across that slanted tile roof, caught him by the foot, and kept him from going over the edge. Everybody said he was a hero, and he got his picture in the paper with the guy he saved standing below where he almost fell and pointing up at the roof. When the army sent somebody to tell us Gary was dead, saving that guy's life was the first thing Daddy said about him. He started telling the army guy all about what Gary did as if it was some heroic life saving thing he'd done in battle instead of on top of some old lady's house.

After Daddy died, I suppose we were everybody's favorite pity family of the day. I got lots of castoff clothes from people who didn't know what else to do for us. A neighbor gave us a barbecue grill, and the guy who owned the Firestone store gave Mama new tires for the Bel-Air because of Gary. Anybody in town who lost a son in Vietnam got a new set of radials from that guy. I guess some people show their patriotism in funny ways.

Mama tried to wear her label without looking like somebody's pitiful crazy relation. She'd lost a son and a husband in little more than a year. Mama had a good business head, and she got a lot of sewing jobs because of everything that had happened. Instead of ordering robes out of a catalog, the First Loomahoochee Methodist Church hired her to make thirty-six choir robes. Our whole den was covered in a layer of forest green rayon fibers. I had dark green boogers for two weeks because of the mess floating in the air of our trailer while Mama sewed those things. After making about six robes she said she didn't even have to think about what she was doing. Her hands operated on auto pilot. In one night she finished two before we even got through

The Mod Squad. I'd read in school about miners with black lung, and I hoped there was no such thing as rayon lung. The church was paying good money and we needed it, so I kept my mouth shut and blew my nose a lot. They paid her $216 for all those robes. We thought we were rich. I knew Mama was finally feeling good about things when she cashed that check because she stopped at Whatley's store on the way home from the bank and bought me a Snickers bar and a Dr. Pepper without me even asking. She's the one who likes Snickers bars, not me, but that didn't matter. I knew she was trying to do something nice for me, so I thanked her and swallowed it all down.

The most important people mother sewed for were the rich ladies in Hopedale who ordered things like custom-made coats and evening dresses. Mother called them clientele, and we liked the name. It made her sound like the owner of some fancy boutique they all shopped in. I knew she was just a seamstress, but I told my friends at school she was an evening-gown designer. The ones who were dumb enough to believe there could be such a thing in Loomacoochee were impressed. Before Daddy died she didn't do much seamstress work except to make a little extra money around Christmas and in the dead of winter when he didn't have much roofing work. Her sewing machine interfered with the TV set making it snow real bad whenever she pushed the foot pedal, so she and Daddy had a system worked out that she pinned, cut, basted, and marked while the show was on, and she operated the machine while the commercials were on. Daddy, Gary, Cecile, and I would be sacked out in the den yelling "Go Mama!" and then, "Show's back on!" If she was in the middle of a seam she'd finish it even if we'd yelled that the show was back on. Daddy would keep yelling for her to stop, and she would keep on going till she came to the end of her seam. He might miss twenty-five seconds of I Dream of Jeannie, like you couldn't figure out that plot with a half-ounce of brain power, but he'd be all pissed off about it and she'd just ignore him or shout out her standard, "Kiss my foot," which evolved into the bolder, "Kiss my ass." A few

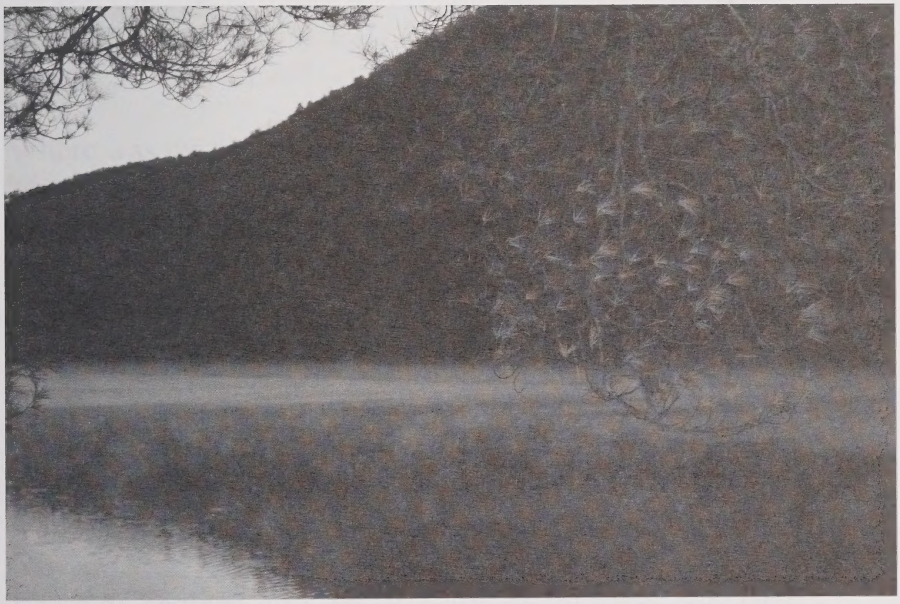
months before he died that became, "Kiss my ass, peabrain." After Daddy died she moved her machine in the den and the television played and snowed on and on for hours while she sewed. I saw about two-thirds of most every show of the 1969 season.

The trailer got redecorated after each time somebody died. A shrine to Gary went up above the sofa. Mama found a bunch of pictures of Gary from when he was a baby up to his military picture that he sent us before he shipped out. I saw some other military pictures of my friend's brothers and dads. They all looked the same. Their hair was shaved off showing their skull bumps and high foreheads that before had always been covered with big goofy bangs. They all had surprised, scared looks like big old babies that somebody had yelled at to sit up straight and look into the camera. Gary looked as if he had to pee real bad. He was smiling this pained, tight smile without showing any teeth, and his chin was pushed down into his neck like in a cartoon where somebody hits you on the head and it gets pushed down like an accordion. When she first put it up Mother liked to say how handsome and grown up he looked in that picture. Cecile and I would roll our eyes, stick our fingers down our throats, and make gagging sounds before falling down on the floor and kicking our feet like rabid dogs. We quit doing it after he died. We would just look at each other and dip our heads forward feeling kind of uncomfortable about it. It's funny how when somebody dies all you're supposed to remember about them is what a good person they were. With Gary that was like remembering only 10 percent of him. Mama went on about what a good baby he was and how he ate better than the rest of us and didn't play in his food like Cecile or spit it all up like I did, as if the measure of a man was his ability to eat as much as a cow, not put his hands in his food, and vomit as little as possible. Cecile and I figured those qualities got him far in the army.

## Immemorial

By Ron Layne

Eyes closed; their delicate enchantment wanes
And dispossession heeds the ancient call
To empty the coffers while She remains
Impassive listening to statues fall,
Dust settles and the wait, as Time devours
The fragments of memory She holds close,
For memory persists beyond the hours.
She yearns to escape from the chemist dose,
As the monarchy offers nothing more
And calls upon all probability,
Only to remember the ancient lore
As She floats adrift among vanity
To be pulled by currents back toward now
While She dances upon the Pequod's bow.



*Lake Logan 05*
*Jennifer Lynn Browning*

**The Whole of Me**
By Debra Deitering Maddox

It happened. I finally lost my mind.
It wasn't just one final blow.
One last kapow.
One grand finale of an incident.
No. Much more subtle than that.

An accumulation.
Adding that last grain of sand.
The *final* drop of water
that spilled the cup of sanity into Lost Lake.
Leaving the glass so empty I wasn't there anymore.

Miracles do happen.
I made it this long.
This many decades. Years. Months. Weeks.
Days. Hours. Minutes and Seconds.

Carrying your baggage, you broke my back.
My soul has ruptured into a trillion zillion molecules
That once made up the whole of me.
I am no more.

The assignment.
With my first breath,
To me it was given.

"Be my companion. I am lonely."
"Be superior in all things, Stepford Child.
Supreme …
In smarts
Looks
Athletics
Music

Elocution
Writing
Deportment.
For you will be
What I could not.

"If you can't be it, marry it.
If you can't marry it, bear it.
I have . . . and you will."

Where was my tiny crawlspace in life?
My miniscule locket to hide
The tiniest mote of Me?

The commandment made in 100 different ways:
"Never grow up."

But I do.
Against your iron will
Viciously pulling at the inevitable reins of time.
Your teeth gnashing and clenching with a banshee cry of iced will.
No matter.
I do. I do begin to grow up.

"I will love you only if . . ."
You are the scholar.
I get Honor Roll, straight A's in college.
You are the musician
I become the chorus accompanist
All-State singer, touring swing choir member.
You are the athlete
I win state titles, state records.
The scholarships come.

If you are good.
Never a cigarette, a beer, a drug, sex.
I understand. I believe. I accept your credo.

It will be years before I understand why.
That to love another is to put them before you.
"You will pay" is your message.

And I do pay
With check upon check written
(85 lbs., veins bursting in eyes.)
(Hours long crying jags. Lost. Forlorn.
A small circular box.
No way out and no tunnel to see the end.)
(Greg gone to haunt my dreams
And daytime regrets for 25 years.)

You want me as an attorney.
I want to be a teacher.
I am disowned.

I have a serious relationship.
I am kicked from the house.
"Do not call.
Be not allowed on this property.
Police will be called."

I lose a pair of boots.
I am thrown out of the house.
The parental scream: "Never come back."
I am 13 years old.

The cycle over and over and over again.
Imperfect. Good-bye.
Perfect. Welcome.

Sentenced to death by my executioner mother.
Father ever-present silent witness.
Guilty of the sin of wanting myself.
Just Me.

Oh, to be loved not
For the face, for the figure, for the brain.
Not for the talents, nor the skills, nor the abilities.
To be loved not for the trophies, nor the medals, nor the crown.

What for the honesty? Ethics? Character? Loyalty?
The never recognized moralty? Honesty? Fairness?

Who I was. Who you missed out on.
Who you never knew.

## How to Tie Your Shoes

By Debra Deitering Maddox (inspired by AB Tech Student Thomas Richards)

Small tots learn to tie their shoes around the ages of 5 or 6 years. I learned when I was seventeen. My grandfather taught me … a man of very few words but who had seen a lot and experienced more. And when he spoke, I listened. And remembered.

"If a man can't tie his own shoes, he ain't worth spit," he said one summer day while we gardened side by side. "And life is a lot like tyin' up your shoes, Richard. You can get all tangled up in the knots. But if you practice long enough, you can avoid all the twists."

He then told me the 3 simple steps I was to remember.

"First, decide what kind of shoe to wear. Not an easy decision; a lot of choices. The worst, though, is the slip-on. It's the lazy man's shoe -- a short-cut, no effort. And the end result is that you pretty much get out of it what you put into it -- the slip-on gets loose and rides up and down on your heel causin' blisters. Funny how life is like that, Richard. Laziness on one end only causes more and more problems on the other.

"Plus, those slip-ons slip *off* at the wrong times. You can walk right out of your shoes. And if you get stuck in the mud, off comes the shoe and now you're standin' there like a flamingo with a dirty sock. People get stuck in the mud all the time, Richard. You need a reliable pair of shoes that'll help you get out of the mud intact. Kinda like friends. You don't want friends that leave you flamingo-like with dirty socks. They need to stick with you and help you get out of the mud.

"It's all in the choices."

Grandfather liked the shoes with laces. More effort, more time, but dependable. Secure. They wouldn't easily slip off. My grandfather also thought laced shoes were a metaphor for life.

"You start with the holes at the bottom near the toe," he continued. "Push one of your laces into the hole on the right side of the shoe. Then push the same lace tip through the hole on the left side, pullin' the lace 'til it's even. This is where your life starts. Even. No twists, no knots.

"Cross the laces. Crossovers are the choices we make in life. These choices can sometimes get you tied up in knots if you're not careful."

All those crossovers, I later realized. The many sliding doors. Who to marry? Drink and drive? Where to live? Try drugs? What profession? All choices that Grandfather said could get me tied up in knots if I wasn't careful. But Grandfather wasn't finished.

"Step 3 is the pretty bow. Grip both ends of the laces and pull. Take the right-sided lace and fold it in half, doing the same with the left. Cross the two halves. Push the left lace under the right. Grip the lace loops and pull tight.

"That bow is the end of your life, Richard. The finale to the laces, all those choices you made. Do you have knots? Did you miss a hole? Are the laces nice and tight? Are your shoes comfortable?"

It took me half a lifetime to truly understand what Grandfather was saying in the garden that afternoon. In the interim years, I made knots, had to smooth them out, had to start over re-

tying sometimes. But as Grandfather said, tying shoes takes patience and hard work. Thanks to Grandfather, my shoes are a bit more broken in every year on their way to old friend comfortability.

## Venus and Adonis

By Erin O'Neal

Adonis lay prone on a plush
grass carpet. Smooth blades
gently genuflect—their heads
nestled in the ground; sunshine,
she reflects gracefully through
his one cocked eye. The clouds
part and her show begins.
Adonis watches as Venus
makes her entrance—
slender arms move lithely.
She beckons and Adonis attempts
to rise, but the body
betrays him. Stuck—he
grasps. I want to tell him
what I see so I call out,
but he cannot hear me
out there.
I want to tell him that my heart
ceased for a moment. The
audience begins to buzz and
murmur. I realize it is
over for them,
but I am still
a blade of grass softly
bowing to pay homage
to his Venus.

## Gardening—1979

By Erin O'Neal

Princess Leia braids and a white sundress,
she kneels pulling spindly weeds while
sprinkling acrid, white powder.
Sticky hot mosquito bites on my legs,
I itch as she pulls.
Rotting tomatoes litter underneath the vines;
the heat causes them to ripen too quickly.
The powder smells sharp, my nose burns.
I kneel beside her turned head, and dip my
tiny finger in the soft mound.
A dab of white powder in the corner of my mouth
and a small trail through the dusty ground.
I just wanted to taste it.
It looked like powdered sugar but
smelled like rotting fruit.

## Traversing the Stretch

By Erin O'Neal

It is exactly four miles from the corner store to my house where I grew up on John's Island, South Carolina. Not a long span but certainly a thinking one and always the home stretch so to speak. When you round the deep corner about three country miles in, the sky opens up, and the road is surrounded by enormous grassy fields. These fields are often punctuated with deer or packs of stray dogs rolling on their backs enjoying the sunshine or gnawing on the trash left on the side of the road by transient motorists. I would like to believe that no one who passes through here daily would leave their mark behind, so I often tell myself that those who have spent the thirty seconds it takes to drive this half a mile only one time cannot bear not to leave something behind saying that they were here, hence the occasional Burger King bag.

Before I could drive, I walked this span. In sweltering summer heat, my legs covered in mosquito bites and the ellipsis of scabs blackberry prickles leave when a limb gets too close, my sister and I would climb in and out of the ditches collecting the large, warm blue-black berries in old Cool-whip containers. In the afternoon, when the heat became unbearable, we would trek back with full buckets and purple-stained lips. My grandmother guided us in washing the delicate fruit, not so easy for chubby, awkward fingers. At some point later in my life, after the island was annexed by the city, large mowers came by and cut these "weeds" away. One day they were gone, and I am not even sure when I noticed. I had moved on.

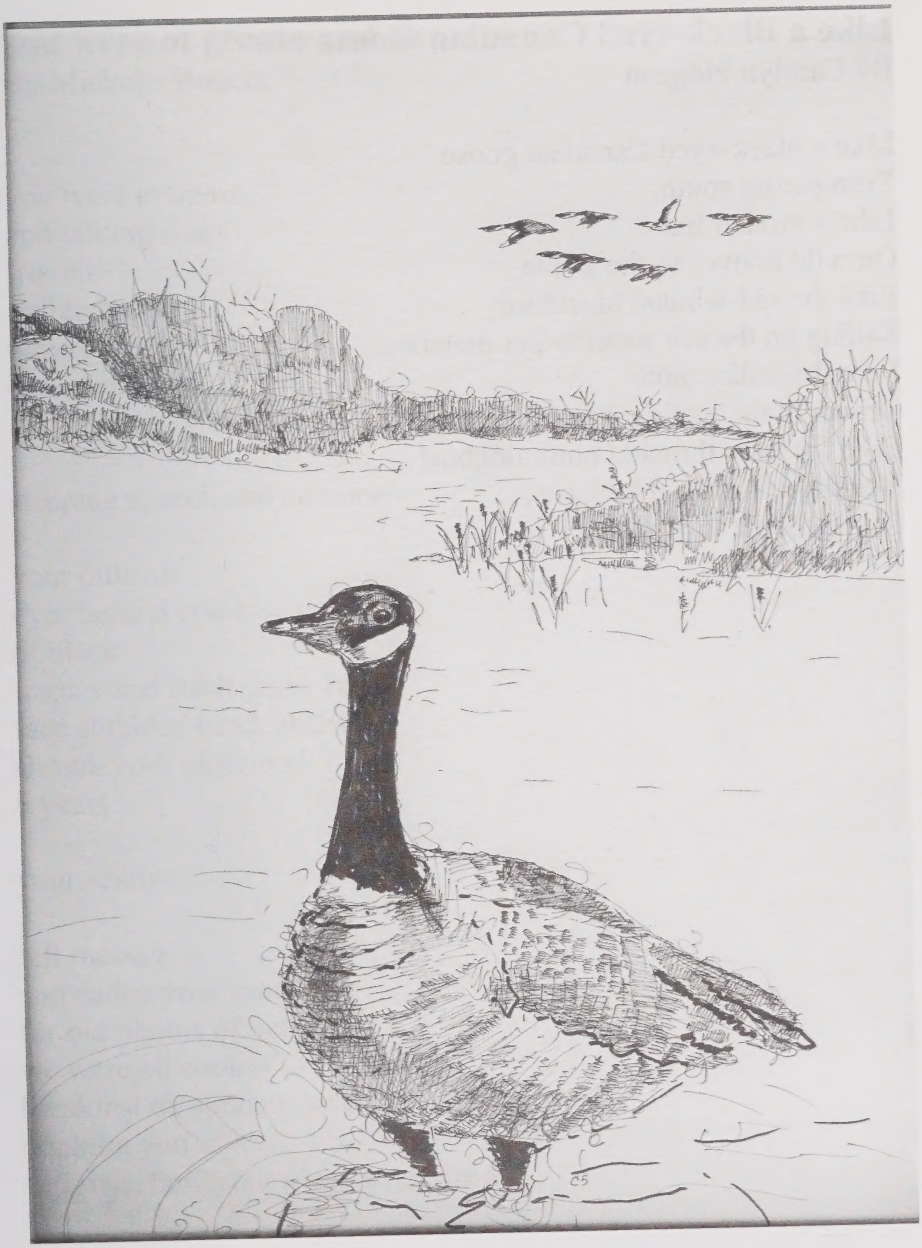
When I got older, I drove this stretch, and if I was lucky, I would come around and look to the right. My breath would leave my body as burning orange and soothing lavender alternated chunks of sky taking up the expanse above the trees whose dark silhouettes always looked to me like petrified rock women dancing. Slender arms wove to the left and right quiet and still

rather stuck in their rhythm. Hypnotized, my hands would guide my car to the side of the road, and I would sit and watch.

Now I no longer drive this stretch daily, so it becomes a more poignant reminder. I roll down my windows here so I can smell the air. It is warm and salty and lingers with the scent of pluff mud. My hair begins to stand up and separate from the humidity and my skin feels sticky and damp. My senses have taught my mind to realize that I am home. But if I am home, I must have been somewhere…not home.

When I leave and travel towards the corner, this stretch of road feels different than it does coming in. My mind looks ahead to where I am going. I am giddy. From here, barely seventeen, I left for college anxious to escape what I perceived as the clutches of my parents' rules which I discovered were rather non-existent as my friends and I swapped war stories. A few years later, from here I left with everything I owned either stuffed in or strapped on my vehicle for Montana. The car was fueled by hasty and pure nineteen-year-old love that would later morph to affection that time often relegates this sort of love to. And finally, almost a decade later, having acquired many more things, my car, my Dad's truck, and a horse trailer traveled this expanse to take me to the mountains where I have started the next leg of my trip.

Eudora Welty describes time as confluent. This is the way time works in the mind…more concurrent than linear. I think of life's pilgrimage this way. In the center is this place where I grew up which is familiar and central, but I have to leave it. When I come back, I am never where I started because even when the smell of pluff mud brings me back…way back…there has been a journey in between.



*Like a Black-eyed Canadian Goose*
*Constance M. Smutz*

## Like a Black-eyed Canadian Goose

By Carolyn Pidgeon

Like a black-eyed Canadian goose
Trumpeting south,
Like a mother mare
On wild hooves to the stable,
Like the red-winged blackbird
Sailing on the salt scent to her marshes,
Like the milky moth
Drawn to the mellow moonflower,
Like the ruby throated hummingbird
Needling to the red hibiscus,
I come home to you.

## you were of grease and us

By Michelle Rogers

you were in Spain
and talking shop
'round
coffee house
tabled
between beers quaff
and overthrow the government

steeping speech and corners

your bulged
eyes behind crank
of black
frames and fresh shave babed
face stubbled head, shoulder-
shrunk your girlfriend
6 years

your senior

left messages
and called your mom
for old photos of before for
we were all cookin'
breakfast on sundays sweatin'
thinking you
and fists, how your glasses manifest

cracking eggs

and falling shells, fingers swimming
at yolk and albumen, pushing

spatula and custards for challah
dippings / tossings atop
flat and searing, flipping tans
to squish middle and measure
tolerance

– how the borders are always ready first –

bacon sizzle curl
and caricatures
of American customers – their soggy
innards with fork and knife ending
table top and napkin touches
of Beatles play and Dylan
"…can I jump on it some

time?" in crook of arms
plates and swerve
round over head
by tips
to crash sweats
alive opening bathroom
door and customers

proofing
like bread they're
buying –saliva

they're tossing counters

to quaint and patio
under branched umbrellas
sauté of sun
or chalked sidewalk
(feeling very much) next

to Michael Stipe
and you're in Spain speakin'

pidgin bread-
crummin' fashionables and soakin'
a-polities loose tongued
streets and building
from absence
of oil
and us

*Mt. Pisgah Tower*
*Dr. Joe Franklin*

## Your Life Begins

By Susan Shorey

From the womb
your first breath
mouth to breast
your life begins.
Beauty untold I see before me, beloved son.

Perfect in every way
breathing strong and steady
red hair, green eyes, maybe brown
an angel's face so full of love.
Beauty beyond anything I imagined, beloved son.

Twenty-four years come and go
so much joy, so much sorrow
you live your life with such integrity, such intensity
so full of love.
Today I watch you take your last breath, beloved son.

Perfect in every way
but with no breath
red hair, hazel eyes
your beautiful face so full of love.
Sorrow untold and beyond anything I ever imagined, beloved son.

## I See Him

By Susan Shorey

I see him
long, red hair
boots
backpack.

I see him
walking
talking
smiling.

I see him
expressive
happy
laughing.

I see him
full of life
and for a moment
imagine he is you, beloved son.

*Beaver's Perch*
*Jennifer Lynn Browning*

## Frozen

By Gabrielle Thompson

Cerulean mist envelops the holler
as daybreak announces the passing of the storm.
My eyes strain through its enchantment
to the bent-back form of the hemlocks,
weighted in cocoons of ice,
anticipating the rescue of dawn.

As the sun crests the mountain,
the mist lifts and swirls
like white dervishes in mad disarray
escaping the darkened hillside's crevices
floating ever-upward in joyous abandon.

The light breaks full-force on deciduous trees
whose tubular-sheathed branches of clear, sparkling ice
ignite in crystal-fired beauty that overwhelms the passion of the sky.
The firs grovel in their white shag chains
feeling the stroke of the sun's rays and their promise of redemption.

I cautiously follow my driveway,
careful of my footing on black-ice surprises.
I stop periodically to gaze upward at the mare's tails'
pronouncement of change and thaw
while maples and sourwoods drop rivers of tears in the melt.

At the pond, a heron stands sentry
awaiting the warmth that will encourage activity
and bring his daily meal to the surface or bank.
Yellowed grasses hold dew-encrusted spider webs
radiating rainbows with a promise of color's return.

*Fernihurst*
*Dr. Joe Franklin*

## Sundays with Mrs. Morrison

By Chris Tibbetts

Quietly courting
across nursing home rooms and hospital beds,
Communicating with eyes
rather than with words.
I to be with you to be with her
For without her I would not have you.

Some Sundays her face would light up
at the sight of you entering
Softly sounding out your name
in joyful recognition
of her youngest—
At 52, still her baby.
These Sundays her eyes
would follow the baseball on T.V.
and we would delight in her
strident calls of "Strike!"
Sweet potato casserole smuggled in
and endless glasses of iced tea
showed she still had thirst and taste
for life.

Other Sundays,
the grim set of her jaw
gave nothing away.
I watched you watching her
on these sadder Sundays,
aching for a glimpse of that
fiery Irish flare to break through
the withering frame.

Hours spent coaxing her to eat
just a few more spoonfuls
of pureed mystery meat,
our desire for her recovery stronger than her own.

Yet you never gave up
trying to reach
the mama you knew trapped inside
that worn 91 year old body.
Performing wheelchair stunts,
Dancing a duet with a can of Ensure,
Playing solitaire for three,
All were worth it for a hint of a smile
from the woman who gave you birth.

My love for you was born on one these visits—
does it even matter which one?
The tableau is etched on my brain forever:
A son saying goodbye to his mother
forehead to forehead.
"Be a good bird," you said cheerfully,
And lower, with tenderness,
I love you, mama."
I could die happy in such love.

Months later, she struggled to pass from this world to the next
and you struggled to let her go.
That final night the toughest of your life, you said.
"What do I do to help her?"
you asked as we passed vigil together
"The same thing you've always done—
hold her hand and tell her you love her."
She knew you were there,

then and those many Sundays
even though she couldn't tell you so.
Your presence was the most precious gift.

And Florence Rose Egan Morrison blessed me
with a gift in her passing
allowing me to witness the beauty of your spirit
as you tearfully said goodbye to hers.

"Take care of my son," she commanded to me once.
"Yes, ma'am, I will."

I promise.

## Afloat After Your Death

By Erik Tschekunow

From where I sit, sipping morning
coffee, I see your house key
hanging, still, on its hook
and imagine it an anchor
whose chain sways above me,
attached high overhead
to a big, quiet boat—unmoving—
where you sit on deck
sipping margaritas,
waiting for me, someday,
to bring you your towel.

## Spotting Elizabeth Bishop on the Gloucester Docks

By Erik Tschekunow

She was gutting fresh fish for an audience of tourists
who'd come to see seafood's first contact.
Without a word, she flicked and split and tossed
the brown-silver corpses quick as three beats.
Sure, she wasn't herself: burly, bearded, draped
in a slicker the color of *National Geographic.*
And there was no hesitation, no
second guessing this time. None of these fish
were going back; the only rainbows
from spilt blood, entrails,
steam spilling from her nose
into early-morning cold.
Still, she looked, as if at a Key West sunset,
into each fish's isinglass eyes
before prying them out.

Miss Bishop, have you grown inconsiderate
in your reincarnation? Or have you arrived at a new genius
where it doesn't matter how and how quickly we go?

## After Making Love to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*

By Erik Tschekunow

On the deck, like it was Friday night
and summer, but it's only
Wednesday, and only March.

A breeze squeezes
through the back woods--
easy to mistake for wind
--nudging us just enough . . .

Here's the sky--
sinking, wrapping us in night
as we prepare dinner
as we have a thousand times before.

The potatoes are out tonight!
O, the potatoes are out tonight!
And you and I are careful
to let our hands touch
when dropping stars
into a boiling pot.

## Notes on contributors

**Kenet Adamson** serves as Interim Dean of Arts and Sciences when not teaching literature or composition classes. Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College finally found a niche to maximize Kenet's prodigious talents as a teacher by making him an administrator. He is recognized as a well-known vaunter, mooncalf, and periphrastic scribbler. Yearly, Victoria Press performs a benignancy by publishing one of his "poems".

**Joe Allawos** teaches Biology in the Division of Arts and Sciences at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Denise Anthes** teaches in the Nursing Department at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Judy Borum** has been employed with Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College for 30 years. She works in the Continuing Education Department for the Occupational Training area and assists with Corporate and Economic Development at the Enka Campus.

**Jennifer Browning** teaches in the English and Communications Department at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Clayton Couch** works as a reference libarian in the Learning Resources Center at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Tom Dechant** is Dean of Learning Resources at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Alexandra DeSiato** is a smarmy adjunct instructor {in the English and Communications Department at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College} with a nice dog and a great haircut. She is hoping to rule the world one day.

**Nancy Dillingham** is a writer, educator, editor, and activist. She is the author of three books, co-editor of one and a featured "NC Poet of the Week"; her forthcoming book is entitled *Thanks for the Dark but That's Not Home*. She teaches part time in Adult Basic Skills at Haywood Community College.

**Eileen Eliot** is an adjunct instructor (Eng. 090, etc.) at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College. She moved to Asheville in 2004 with her family (currently including two kids and 25 pets) after a twenty year stint as a prof at Broward Community College in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

**Chris Fay** is Assistant Director of the Law Enforcement Academy and has in his adult working and personal life owned or handled seven German shepherd dogs, adoring them all for their companionship and unflagging loyalty.

**Joe Franklin** is a long-time employee of Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College where he has served as dean for the past 13 years. Actively involved in his church, Joe also enjoys Asheville history, photography and music -- particularly collecting old hymns.

**Kathy Godfrey** teaches creative writing and other English classes in the English and Communications Department at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Randee Goodstadt** has had a passion for reading and writing since she was a young kid. She has taught history at Asheville

Buncombe Technical Community College since 1991 and chairs the Social & Behavioral Sciences Department.

**Cathy James'** short stories and essays have been published in *Utne, The Philosophical Mother, Heliotrope, Ghoti, WNCwoman, The Harrington Gay Men's Quarterly*, and *Maelstrom*. She was the winner of the Mona Schreiber Prize for Humorous Fiction and the Virginia-Highlands Creative Writing Festival for Best Novel. She has received other awards from the Southern Festival of Books, the Southern Women Writers Conference Emerging Writers Contest, WNCwriter's Short Story Contest, and the National League of Pen Women's Soul-Making Literary Competition. Cathy teaches as an adjunct instructor in the English Department at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Ron Layne** teaches Math for the Developmental Studies Department at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Debra Maddox** teaches Speech and Communications at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College. Prior to working for ABTCC, she was a contract writer for 8 years, working for various companies and advertising agencies. She has been published in over 20 magazines and newspapers.

**Erin O'Neal** is an adjunct instructor in the English Department at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College. She enjoys writing poetry and short stories in her free time.

**Carolyn Pidgeon** is an instructor in the Compensatory Education program in the division of Continuing Education at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Michelle Rogers** is a Library Assistant at the Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College Learning Resources Center and holds a B.A. in English from the University of Georgia.

**Susan Shorey** is the coordinator of the Madison County JobLink Career Center and has been working for Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College since January of 1998. She has a BA in Sociology and a MS in Human Resource Development. She is the mother of four children, Shannon, Sarah, Daniel and Shawn and is currently working on a book of poetry entitled *Beloved Son* to honor her son, Daniel, who died suddenly at the age of 24.

**Constance Smutz** is an instructor in the Compensatory Education program at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Gabrielle M. Thompson** is Coordinator of Library Services at McDowell Technical Community College.

**Chris Tibbetts** is the chairperson of the English and Communications departments at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

**Erik Tschekunow**, refusing to sell his soul, tries to make a living with poetry. He is the recipient of the 2002-03 Emerson WLP Prize for poetry and his chapbook, *Build Your Own Worship Workbook*, is forthcoming from the University of Pittsburgh Press. Erik teaches as an adjunct in the English and Communications Department at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College.

043 B7P 8749
02/21/13 30395 MC
BHGroup